Lafayette Historical Society NEWS
Enlightening Our Community

Lafayette, California | January 2012 | Vol. 40, No. 1

Happy New Year from everyone at LHS

Lafayette Historical Society's Speaker Series

Meet the Marquis: Who was La Fayette and why are we named after him?

Wednesday, **February 15, 2012** ~ *3:00 p.m.*

Speaker: **Gilbert Sonet**, Lafayette resident and La Fayette research expert

Arts and Science Room *(Mezzanine Level)*

Lafayette Library *and* Learning Center • ***Limited seating***

Donation requested – **$10** LHS Members; **$15** for Non-Members

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, *Marquis de La Fayette*, left France in early 1777 to seek service in the American Revolution. He defied his family and King Louis XVI and at 19-years of age became the youngest commissioned regular general officer in the US Army.

He's been described as a soldier, hero and a "Rock Star". His travels between France and the United States and his relationships with **George Washington** and **Thomas Jefferson** are well documented. It is said that upon his return to the U.S. in 1824 after being released from prison in Austria by Napoleon, he was met by "demonstrations of frenzied enthusiasm without precedent or parallel in American history." He was a true rock star in his time.

How many cities in the U.S. are named in honor of this nobleman? You'll learn about his adventures in the U.S. as well as his impact on politics in France. ***Mark your calendar now*** and join us on *Wednesday,* **February 15** for this interesting session.

The presentation will be held in the *Arts and Science Room* in the L**afayette Library and Learning Center** *(Mezzanine level)*. Enter on the *First Street side* of the building.

Membership Renewal Month

January is the month that we ask our members to continue their support for our organization. We appreciate the enthusiasm that everyone has shown during the first two years in the **Lafayette Library & Learning Center**. It is through membership dues that we have been able to support our *Speaker Series* and tours. Our largest expenditure continues to be the **History Room's** rent, and the reality is that we need your help to continue our work.

President's Message

Happy New Year to all of our historical friends…..we hope your holidays were happy and that one of your resolutions for the 2012 will be to continue your involvement with and support of our historical society.

In October we presented two very successful programs about **Lafayette's Historical Cemetery** – more than 40 attendees enjoyed our talk about the landmark in the ***Arts & Science Room*** and a walking tour of the cemetery.

October Cemetery Tour Participants

We are beginning the year with another program for your enjoyment and edification. On **February 15** from ***3-4 pm*** in the *Arts and Science Room*, **Gilbert Sonet** will be presenting a program ***"Meet the Marquis"*** about the **Marquis de La Fayette**…..although our city is named after this French gentleman of the 18th century, he never visited here. ***So why is our city so named and who was this French nobleman?*** Join us and find out.

We plan to offer another two-part program in the spring, much like our cemetery program in October. This time we will present a program about **downtown Lafayette** *(now and then)* followed by **a walking tour of the historical areas of the downtown**. Watch for further information in the upcoming months.

I'd also like to remind you that your support (volunteer or financial) is greatly appreciated. There are still projects that need organizing, newspaper clippings to be clipped and filed, and displays to put together. Volunteers *(such as the **Kikkerts** and **Marechal Duncan** featured in this newsletter)* are always welcome, be it for a two-hour shift once a month, weekly, or for special events. The **Historical Society** is also required to pay occupancy costs for our space as well as for other expenses incurred in our room so fundraising is also important for our on-going survival. ***Any donations of your time or financial support are greatly appreciated.***

It's also time to think about renewing your **Annual Membership**. We'll be sending out ***membership renewal reminders*** later in the month. **If you are not a member now you might just be hearing from us!**

Please stop by to see how we are preserving Lafayette's history…..we are open **Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday** from *10:00 am until 2:00 pm*.

—Mary McCosker

Some History from Acalanes High School

There is a hill behind Camino Court called *"Dotted Hill"* because of its two distinctive peaks. I used to hike up there when I was a kid. It was pretty barren save a house and a "shed". My mom told me that **Acalanes High School** had a radio station that broadcasted from that "shed". When I arrived at Acalanes in the fall of 1997, there was no radio station. Using the resources available at the ***Lafayette Historical Society's History Room***, I started digging and found more than the station. I discovered a place where driven students could make things happen and the man that created it.

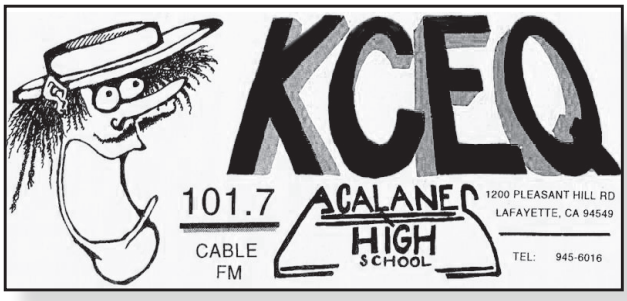
The ***Acalanes Radio Club*** begins with **Wendell Pleis**. Pleis came out to California from Nebraska in 1964 to teach electronics and mathematics. At **Del Valle High School** in 1976, Wendell met a freshman named **Jonathan**. The idea of a radio station had been floated, but none of the students had the "moxy", as Wendell put it, that Jonathan did. Wendell saw his motivation and helped him to run with it. Jonathan began to go through the motions necessary to get a station at **Del Valle**. He went so far as to get the call letters **KNTA** when the school shut down in 1979. Wendell went to **Acalanes** and Jonathan went elsewhere. It could have meant the end of the station except that another motivated student stepped up to restart the process.

Room 501 the Home of KCEQ

Mark Jeffrey had been part of the push at **Del Valle** and moved with Wendell to Acalanes. At Acalanes he was nipping at Wendell's heels and again Wendell helped a motivated student. This time to give birth to the ***Acalanes Radio Club***. The ***Radio Club*** spent two years doing the paperwork, raising funds, and building a studio in room 501. On **November 15, 1982** the students began broadcasting as **KCEQ** on **100.5 FM**. They had a variety of programming including talk shows, editorials, interviews and news, along with playing music. The radio station became a place where students like Jonathan and Mark Jeffrey could take their ideas and make them a reality. They also obtained practical experience in what it takes to work at and run a radio station.

Fundraising kept the station alive and was a vital function of the ***Radio Club.*** They *DJ'd* events such as school dances, obtained sponsorships, and conducted *DJ-athons*. *DJ-athons* had students pledging to stay on the air for a certain number of hours. At times, certain students ended up doing ***marathon runs upwards of 70 hours.***

Extending the reach of the ***Radio Club*** was a primary goal. They reached out to the teachers and students from other schools who wanted to participate. Teachers **Larry Freeman** and **Ernest De Martini** *DJ'd*. Freeman brought his English students to read their compositions on the air. Students from the ***Miramonte Broadcasting club*** would come to Acalanes and work at the station. heir compositions on the air. Students from the ***Miramonte Broadcasting club*** would come to Acalanes and work at the station.



KCEQ Fund Raising Bumper Sticker

—Michael Troutman

Family Rediscovers Its Own History

In *May, 1846*, a wagon train of 14 families and 16 wagons led by **Elam Brown** headed west from St. Joseph, Missouri. Brown eventually bought 900 acres and started what later became the town of Lafayette. **Margaret Allen** and her husband, **Isaac**, were part of Brown's train, but Isaac died of typhoid on the trip west. Margaret, left a widow with 11 children, married Elam after arriving in Lafayette, and the town's first family was created.

When the modern-day descendants of Lafayette's founding couple wanted to organize an **Allen-Brown family reunion** they turned to the **Lafayette Historical Society** (*LHS*). On October 29, 2011, a dozen descendants of the families gathered at **LHS** for an afternoon of reminiscing and discovery. Cousins who had never met in person came from as far away as Fort Bragg and San Luis Obispo.

The reunion was organized using the following evite, *"Come meet distant Allen Brown cousins… Dust off those old family photos, genealogy charts, Allen/Brown research documents and artifacts, bring them along to share.Please forward this Evite to other Allen Brown family members that you think would like to attend this event."*

Allen-Brown Reunion

Each family member wore a badge with his or her name, the name of the ancestor, and the ancestor's photo on it. **Judie Peterson** of **LHS** worked with the family creating these. "Our ancestors were two steps from the pioneers, yet we are fortunate that they documented their family history," one of the family members explained. "Now it's a lifetime of research for us. What's the saying, you don't have to know what you're looking for – one thing leads to another. Everyone who came has the genealogy bug and is interested in validating what happened and when."

"We wanted to give our family members the chance to meet each other and to share their wealth of photos and documents, as well as help **LHS** build its archives and expand its network of source people," a local family member who volunteers at **LHS** added.

"We are indebted to **LHS** for keeping our family genealogy alive. It's amazing seeing how hard the volunteers work, and their dedication. We're planning on getting together every year."

LHS president Mary McCosker says, "We were delighted to assist the family, and they graciously allowed us to scan their personal pictures, which are valuable additions to our photo database. We want local residents to be aware of the treasure trove of material we have at our disposal, if they're interested in researching ancestors who lived in Lafayette."

For more information call *925-283-1848* or visit www.lafayettehistory.org. **LHS History Room** in the ***Lafayette Library and Learning Center*** is open **Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday**, *10 a.m. – 2 p.m.*

—Julie Sullivan

Meet Our Board and Volunteers

Marechal Duncan

Marechal Duncan

Born in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1922, **Marechal** grew up in San Diego. He came to the Bay Area in 1944 on the Navy V-12 program to earn a BS degree at UC Berkeley in Electrical Engineering. He married teacher **Doris Paulson** in 1947 and some years later earned an MBA from Pepperdine University. Marechal retired more than 25 years ago after a 28-year career with Motorola, where he pioneered radio paging and cellular phones for the western U.S. Marechal and Doris built their current home in Lafayette 56 years ago. In their 64 years of marriage they have traveled all around the world. Each year Marechal and Doris attend the reunion of the crew of the aircraft carrier he served on in World War II. Marechal was assigned to a minesweeper and was scheduled to be at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. As our fortune would have it his orders were changed.

Marechal is the *Vice President* of the **Historical Society**….. but that's not all he does. He is a founding member of the **Lafayette Community Foundation**, serving on the group's ***Liaison Committee For Seniors,*** which he started, and whose purpose is to facilitate collaboration among senior service providers. He co-chaired **Lafayette's Sesquicentennial Celebration**, served on a **City Blue Ribbon Open Space Task Force, a Senior Needs Assessment Committee,** and chaired an event to celebrate Lafayette's historic role as a Pony Express Way Station. Marechal was a Boy Scout leader for 20 years, and a LMYA baseball coach. In his "spare time" he and Doris raised three sons and one daughter. They have seven grandchildren. Marechal is also active in Walnut Creek's **SIRS** ***(Sons in Retirement)*** and is a Master Mason.

But most important to those of us at **LHS**, he volunteers every *Saturday morning from 10-12* in the ***History Room*** and is a valuable asset of our organization. **Come by one Saturday morning and meet Marechal.**

Jeannine Kikkert ***and*** **Patrick Kikkert**

Jeannine was born in Okalahoma on Easter morning the 10th of ten children. She lived there until she was nine years old when the family moved to Hollywood due to a job opportunity for her mother during the Depression. Jeannine took dance and acting lessons as a girl. She moved to Bakersfield to live with an older sister when her mother became ill. She met husband, **David Kikkert**, in Bakersfield, they married and moved to San Francisco when her husband was accepted into Officer Training School in Alameda (he was in the Merchant Marines). After he left the service he worked for a repossession firm and then established his own private investigation business. Six books were written about her husband and his business. The stories were about his dangerous adventures and were written by **Joe**

Jeannine Kikkert and Patrick Kikkert

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A Look into the History Room Collections

Did you, a friend or relative attend Acalanes High School?

SENIOR CLASS OFFICERS

Edward Robinson. . . . . President

Bernice Feagans. . . . . Vice-President

Carolyn Humble. . . . . Secretary

Pat Watkins. . . . . Treasurer

Eleanor Dean. . . . . Secretary of Entertainment

We, the Seniors, feel proud to be the first class to be graduated from Acalanes Union High School. Our only regret being that we have not had a longer time in which to enjoy our new school.

1941 Senior Class Officers

Michael Troutman mentioned in his article about the Acalanes Radio Station, that he used resources available in the ***History Room*** for his research.

With many thanks to Margaret Nicholson, the **Lafayette Historical Society** has a complete collection of ***Acalanes High School Yearbooks***. We have **Aklans** from *1941 through 2009.*

This is just a "taste" of what is in the archives of the **Lafayette Historical Society.** Our ***History Room*** is open **Tuesday, Thursday** *and* **Saturday** – *10:00 am – 2:00 pm*.

Aklan Collection

Meet Our Board and Volunteers

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Gores, a famous mystery author. Jeannine worked in banking for 23 years. Jeannine and David had five children and they all grew up in Lafayette. The family loved their life in Lafayette, especially exploring the history of Lafayette. Jeannine's husband died in 1982. She still lives in the same house with her son Patrick and her other children and six grandchildren live nearby. She loves animals, genealogy and history. She spends her time in the ***History Room*** organizing our historical files and began volunteering soon after the ***History Room*** opened in 2009.

2011-2012 Board of Directors

President: .....Mary McCosker
Vice President: .....Marechal Duncan
Treasurer: ..... Paul Sheehan
Recording Secretary: .....Nancy Flood
Corresponding Secretary: .....Oliver Hamlin
John Otto
Judie Peterson
Tom Titmus
Laura Torkelson
George Wasson
Contact Us:..... History Room – 283-1848
– *or* – lafayette.history@comcast.net

Patrick has lived all of his life in Lafayette and is proud of living here as he loves the history of Lafayette. He enjoys keeping the *"Lafayette Spirit"* and sense of history alive. He works with his brother in his business. Patrick enjoys reading especially about history as well as politics and geography. The internet has been a tremendous aid to his research on genealogy. In the ***History Room*** Patrick is in charge of news clipping from local and regional papers (recent and old ones) that contain information on Lafayette and Lamorinda. He organizes clipping by subject and then files them. He is a font of knowledge about all things historical and remembers an incredible number of important historical details. Patrick began volunteering soon after the ***History Room*** opened in 2009.

Return Service Requested

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549
www.LafayetteHistory.org

Lafayette Historical Society Membership Application

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City-Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Categories and Annual Dues

(Please check one)

- ❑ Student Membership $10.00
- ❑ Individual Membership $25.00
- ❑ Family Membership $50.00
- ❑ Sponsor Membership $500.00

Please indicate areas of special interest

- ❑ Publicity
- ❑ Research-Genealogy
- ❑ Telephoning
- ❑ Displays
- ❑ Oral Histories
- ❑ History Room
- ❑ Data Base Entry of Photos
- ❑ Photo Collection
- ❑ News Clippings
- ❑ Fire Engine
- ❑ Walking Tours-Outreach
- ❑ Other_____

Please mail this application to:

Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, CA 94549